

the guardian weekly

Level » Lower intermediate
Style » Lesson plan

March 2013

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Materials prepared by Janet Hardy-Gould

Mars mission plan launched by US millionaire

Instructions

Lesson focus: reading, verb patterns to express future plans

Materials: copies of article, dictionaries

Time: 55 minutes

- 1 Tell students the article is about plans for a space mission which will be the first of its kind. What "firsts" in space exploration do they know about? Students discuss in pairs. Possible answers: first dog in space, Laika, 1957; first person in space, Yuri Gagarin, 1961; first woman in space, Valentina Tereshkova, 1963; first person on Moon, Neil Armstrong, 1969; first space shuttle, Columbia, 1981. Class feedback. **7 mins**
- 2 Direct student to task 1. Students in pairs with dictionaries match the phrases to the definitions. Class feedback. Establish that they are verb + noun collocations. Elicit why it can be useful to learn "chunks" of language such as this. **8 mins**
 a [] to unveil a plan b [] to make a fortune
 c [] to raise money d [] to fund a mission
 e [] to face hurdles f [] to find room
 1 to provide the money for a project
 2 to persuade other people to give money towards something
 3 to tell people about a new project
 4 to make a lot of money through business
 5 to make enough space for something
 6 to meet difficulties
Answers: a 3 b 4 c 2 d 1 e 6 f 5
- 3 Write the headline on the board. Check unknown vocabulary. What "first" will this space mission be? Students speculate on the nature of the mission. **3 mins**
- 4 Direct students to task 2. Give out copies of the article. Students read and choose the correct words. Class feedback. **10 mins**
 a Dennis Tito is planning to send a *pair/group* of astronauts into space.
 b Tito has become a millionaire from *space exploration/investing money*.
- c Tito *is/isn't* planning to go on the mission himself.
 d The mission *needs/doesn't need* to go at a specific time.
 e Tito plans to provide *all/some* of the funds himself.
 f The mission will *fly past/land on* the surface of Mars.
 g The space capsule for the astronauts will be quite *large/small*.
 h Tito *will/won't* make money from the space trip.
Answers: a pair b investing money c isn't d needs e some f fly past g small h won't
- 5 Ask students: What sort of people should go on the mission? What will some of the biggest hurdles be? Would they like to go on the mission? Why/Why not? Encourage class discussion with reference to the text. **5 mins**
- 6 Look back at the article and ask students to find verbs which express plans for the future - *aims to* (paragraphs 2/6), *is not intending to* (para 3), *plans to* (para 5), *hopes to* (para 5). As a class, students make their own example sentences about the news story using the verbs. Point out that they are all followed by the infinitive. **7 mins**
- 7 Ask students to write and memorise a very brief synopsis of the news story outlining Tito's plans, with *aim to*, *intend to* etc. They should include one piece of false information. The students then work with a partner and recount their synopsis, if possible, from memory. The other student has to listen and identify the mistake. Students then swap roles and finally change partners. **15 mins**

Extension activity: watch as a class a short video of Tito's press conference at: bit.ly/Zzqlfm

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Dennis Tito after his \$20m space flight in 2001 Getty Images

Article: Mars mission plan launched by US millionaire

- 1 A US millionaire who became the first private space tourist has unveiled ambitious plans to send a man and woman - probably a married couple - on a round trip to Mars in 2018.
- 2 Dennis Tito, 72, a former rocket scientist who made his fortune through investments, said his Mission for America aims to encourage a new era of space exploration.
- 3 Tito, who became the first private space tourist when he paid the Russians \$20m for a ticket to the International Space Station in 2001, announced his plans in Washington DC. He is not intending to fly himself.
- 4 The trip will take advantage of the alignment of the planets in January 2018 to fly around Mars and return to Earth in the relatively short time of 501 days. The same opportunity will not arise again until 2031.
- 5 Tito says he plans to fund the mission until the end of 2014 and hopes to raise the rest of the money through donations from private investors and foundations. "There is no time to lose," he said. "Now is the time."
- 6 The mission, likely to launch on 5 January 2018, aims to take a man and woman from the US on a flyby to within 100 miles of the Martian surface, and return them safely to Earth. The actual capsule the pair will travel in, is likely to be "the size of a toilet".
- 7 The mission faces substantial hurdles. The human body adapts to space by losing muscle, and astronauts need daily exercise on resistance machines to slow down the wasting. Finding room for those machines is crucial.
- 8 Experts say the mission will depend on Tito's ability to raise funds. Tito said the cost would be similar to that of a mission to low Earth orbit. But it is almost certain that he will not get rich from the mission.
- 9 He said: "Let me be clear, I will come out a lot poorer as a result of this mission but my grandchildren will come out a lot richer for the inspiration it will give them."

Original article by Ian Sample, rewritten by Janet Hardy-Gould.

Student tasks

- 1 In pairs, match these phrases with their definitions. You can use a dictionary.

- | | |
|---|--|
| a <input type="checkbox"/> to unveil a plan | b <input type="checkbox"/> to make a fortune |
| c <input type="checkbox"/> to raise money | d <input type="checkbox"/> to fund a mission |
| e <input type="checkbox"/> to face hurdles | f <input type="checkbox"/> to find room |

- 1 to provide the money for a project
- 2 to persuade other people to give money towards something
- 3 to tell people about a new project
- 4 to make a lot of money through business
- 5 to make enough space for something
- 6 to meet difficulties

- 2 Read the article and choose the correct words.

- a Dennis Tito is planning to send a *pair/group* of astronauts into space.
- b Tito has become a millionaire from *space exploration/investing money*.
- c Tito *is/isn't* planning to go on the mission himself.
- d The mission *needs/doesn't need* to go at a specific time.
- e Tito plans to provide *all/some* of the funds himself.
- f The mission will *fly past/land on* the surface of Mars.
- g The space capsule for the astronauts will be quite *large/small*.
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